Black panthers in the country

3267. SHRI ABU ASIM AZMI: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

the total number of black panthers in the country as on today;

the number of black panthers killed during the last three years, year-wise;

the total number of their skins, nails, fur and other bone pieces caught during the last three years, year-wise; and

the steps takenbeing taken by Government for the protection of black panthers in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI S. REGUPATHY): (a) to (c) No exclusive census in respect of black panthers has been conducted in the country. Data on the number of black panthers killed and the total number of black panther skins, nails, fur, etc. seized is not collated at the Government of India's level.

(d) The steps taken by Government of India to protect wildlife including black panthers are as under:

The Central Government has enacted the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 to deal with the issues of wildlife conservation including wildlife crime. Stringent penalties are imposed on the offenders for the contravention of the provisions of the Act.

A network of National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries has been set up across the country to protect wildlife.

Wildlife Crime Control Bureau, with a network of five Regional and three Sub-Regional Offices, has been set up to control wildlife crime.

Financial support is being provided under the Centrally Sponsored Schemes viz. — *Development of National Parks and Sanctuaries, Project Tiger and Project Elephant,* to State/UT Governments for the conservation and development of wildlife and its habitats including Black Panther.

India is a signatory to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) that regulates international trade in wildlife and its derivatives.

India has bilateral arrangements with China and Nepal on combating wildlife crime.

Intensive patrolling in sensitive protected areas is carried out in coordination with other law enforcement agencies.

National Parks and Sanctuaries in Sikkim

3268. SHRI O.T. LEPCHA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) the number of projects formulated by Government for development of national parks and sanctuaries in the North-Eastern region particularly in Sikkim State;